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A NORTH-COUNTRY 'LION.'

THOUGH neither Shakespeare nor Sir Walter Scott took Alnwick Castle for his theme of song, prophetically or retrospectively, there is a glamour about this Border stronghold of the ancient Percies that is confessed by most educated persons. Perhaps it is the romance of the old Border song, *Chevy Chase*, that has entered into it; or perhaps it is the renown of Hotspur, and the great part played by the Percies in the destinies of kings, or it may be something in the structure itself, that imparts this charm. Be that as it may, it is certain that any one wishing to see the Lions of the North would miss one of the most impressive if he failed to view Alnwick Castle.

This ancient fortress and residence was not built by the Percies, but was purchased in 1309, by Henry de Percy, who added much to its original strength and accommodation immediately afterwards. Considerable portions of the structure that he acquired, and several of the towers with which he enlarged it, are still standing, and show that the first builders enclosed as large an area as is now surrounded by the curtain-wall. It is not known whether there was a Saxon building on the site, as Northumberland was not included in the great survey we call Domesday Book; but mention of the Norman Castle occurs in a charter granted to William de Vesci by Henry II., which confirmed his right to all the lands and tenures of his father, Eustace de Vesci, including the castle and the whole honours of his grandfather, Ivo de Vesci. These de Vescies were men of note; their barony consisted of sixty manors; their castle was 'most strongly fortified;' and they played important parts in the wars and other business of their times; they founded two abbeys in the neighbourhood of their stronghold, and gave the burgesses of Alnwick the right of pasture over a great tract of moorland, which they still enjoy. Eustace de Vesci was one of the barons who secured for the nation the privileges conferred by the Magna Charta,

and married a daughter of the Scottish king, William the Lion; and William de Vesci, the grandson of this couple, was one of the thirteen claimants to the Scottish throne in the time of Edward I. It was after the death of this baron that Anthony Bek, whom he had left in trust of his Northumbrian estates, sold the castle to Henry de Percy, in the third year of the reign of Edward II.

The keep of this stronghold consisted then, as it does now, of a ring of towers enclosing a central courtyard; and it was placed nearly midway in an area of about five acres in extent, surrounded by a high curtain-wall, strengthened at intervals and at some of the angles with strong towers. There were two moats—one outside the wall, and the other inside, immediately surrounding the keep. Henry de Percy on taking possession built a new barbican, and had his lion and motto, 'Espérance en Dieu,' carved in a panel on the face of it; and he also built new entrance towers to the keep, and a new dining-hall in the keep, with vaulted cellars below it. We may picture him, bronzed with much service in the field, keen and active arranging these matters, of which, however, he had no long enjoyment, as he died about six years after the acquisition. His son probably completed these improvements, and others were occasionally made by his illustrious descendants, especially by the son of Hotspur, whose work has also been identified. When the fortunes of the family prevented, for a time, continuous residence in the north, the great stronghold was left very much to its fate.

In the eighteenth century, four hundred years after Henry de Percy acquired it, and on the marriage of the heiress of the Percies, the Lady Elizabeth Seymour, with the handsome Sir Hugh Smithson, who was created first Duke of Northumberland, a great renovation was accomplished. Many of the old features of the fabric were removed; the towers of the keep were made of uniform height, and the rooms within them made gorgeous with ornamental stucco-work, then much

in vogue. The castle became a commodious residence in the fashion of the day; most of the traces of its garrison use and service were obliterated, and the pleasure-grounds and parks around it were improved by very extensive plantations. In the course of another century the reasonableness and taste of these alterations came to be questioned; and in our own day the knightly structure has been again remodelled and re-embellished. About five hundred and fifty years after the first Percy, lord of Alnwick, ordered the commencement of the works he required, his representative, Algernon, fourth Duke, laid similar commands upon his architect, and upon various Italian artists of note, who forthwith made the Border fortress into the combination of Plantagenet castle and palatial residence we now see.

It stands on a bank on the south side of the river Alne, close to the great North Road, and is built of a mellow-toned sandstone. Of the towers forming the keep one rises higher than the rest; that was built by the fourth Duke, and called the Prudhoe Tower, for the reason that he was known as Lord Prudhoe before he succeeded his brother in the dukedom; and on the summits of many of the other towers, as well as on those along the line of circumvallation and on the barbican, are stone effigies of men throwing down huge stones or discharging arrows, and in other ways appearing to defend their fortress. These stand out boldly against the sky. On passing under the sombrous archway of the barbican, and emerging through an inner gateway beyond it, those who enter find themselves face to face with the keep, in a spacious grass-laid bailey, traversed by a curved stone-paved drive which conducts to the entrance of a second bailey, in which stands the approach to the innermost courtyard. The moat has been almost effaced, and the drawbridge has been replaced by a permanent way; but the Norman archway is the same through which King John passed to and fro on four visits, and under which Henry III. and three King Edwards also passed. On either side of this gateway are Henry de Percy's towers, and below the basement of one of them is the underground prison where captives languished; and just inside it, under a recessed arch, is the well.

Before entering the keep, the curtain-wall is worth a careful glance. It is dove-coloured, dun-coloured, and silver-gray, according to the aspect, and here and there a stone 'streaked with iron brown.' There are different modes of masonry in it, marking where it has been heightened by some of its owners, or a breach made in it by some of its besiegers, or a tower removed and its space filled up as time went by. Those who made these changes, who chipped and fashioned the stones to suit them for their purpose, took no account of the manner in which the previous builders had made their stonework; they did not say, 'We will build as our fathers built of old,' but went on in their own method, the Plantagenet masons with larger stones than those of the Norman masons, and the Tudor builders again with stones that were twice as long as they were high, and sometimes thrice as long. The small squarish stones of the Norman masons are now rounded at the edges and interstices with

the winds and rains and frosts of eight centuries, and are easily distinguished from the less worn work of later years by their regularity and smallness. The Plantagenet ashlar are nobler, larger, of more unequal heights, and make more stalwart walling; and the Tudor work has an air of mellowness, as though it was gradually ripening in the sunshine. Besides the towers, there are garretts, or turrets, along the lines of walls for the shelter of those who manned them. On the tops of some lengths, where it is about five feet thick, are paved footwalks for the warders. From the bases of some of the towers to the height of the tops of the walls are stone stairs to give access to them. If we look narrowly at the parapets we may see a few of the grooves and bolt-holes for the wooden shutters with which the embrasures were once provided for the protection of defenders. And in one length of the curtain may be seen gargoyles in the form of cannon-mouths, placed there in the days when cannon were of a different calibre from those with which we are now familiar.

The towers are of much interest. Their names signify their uses. There is the Abbot's Tower, for instance, which has three spacious chambers one above the other, with a spiral stone staircase giving access to the upper two, with arrow-slits only to light the lowermost and stone-vaulted one, and cusped or shoulder-headed openings of a larger size to light those above. There is the Constable's Tower, which is lighted by crossbow openings, and on the second floor by a double-transomed window of rare pictorial aspect, and which has external stone steps leading to this middle chamber, which opens on to the top of the curtain wall. There is the Record Tower; and there were the Falconers' and Armourers' Towers, now removed; and there is the Postern Tower, also of three stories in height, very strong, stern, and massively walled, with a low narrow doorway in the basement giving access to the wide length of bank between the Castle and the river. Some of them are used as museums; one is an *atelier*; in another is kept the large collection of antiquated arms with which the Percy tenantry proposed to resist Bonaparte's expected invasion; and archives are stored in another.

When we enter the residential part of the Castle, or ring of towers forming the keep, we think no more of the de Vescies; or of Henry de Percy; or of Hotspur; or of the old Earl portrayed for us by Shakespeare; or of the Percies who fought at Cressy, Bramham Moor, Shrewsbury, Towton, Percy's Cross, St Albans, Bosworth, and Flodden; or of the later Earl, 'well horst upon a fayr corser with a footcloth to the gronde of Cramsyn velvet,' who escorted the daughter of Henry VII. through Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland, on the occasion of her progress into Scotland to marry James IV. We think no more, even, of Chevy Chase, as we begin to ascend the magnificent staircase that leads from the entrance hall to the chief apartments. We begin to think immediately of Roman palaces, of San Lorenzo, of the Camera Borghia, of the Castella del San Angelo; of Michelangelo, Bramante, Raphael, and Giulio Romano. Panels of polished Italian marbles line the walls; Venetian mosaic-work is spread

upon the floor of the vestibule into which the staircase conducts us; arcades and pilasters, frescoes, friezes, bas-reliefs, meet the eye; and tones as of lurid sunsets on the Campagna, or of awakening sunrises on southern seas, recall gorgeous interiors of cinquecento workmanship in the Eternal City. The vestibule gives access to an antechamber, from which the library is entered on the one hand; and the saloon, and beyond that the drawing-room and dining-room, on the other. A corridor also departs from it in another direction, which furnishes communication with these and other apartments, as well as with other staircases and the gallery of the chapel.

The library, as is the case with all the other rooms, follows the contour of the tower in which it is placed. It is fifty-four feet long, with a bay in the centre that projects sixteen feet; and it has three fireplaces in it, with coloured marble mantel-pieces, and two tiers of bookcases, one above the other, all round it, the upper one of which is approached by a staircase in the thickness of the walls, and furnished with a light gallery. The ceiling is divided into four compartments, in which are octagonal panels with carved devices relating to the arts and sciences.

On the opposite side of the antechamber, which is hung with damasked satin and very richly decorated and furnished, a door opens into the saloon, in which a bay following the contour of a semicircular tower is modified into a semi-octagon with slanting angles. The white marble mantel-piece is supported by Roman slaves; the dado is of walnut and maple inlaid; the window shutters and doors are richly carved; the walls hung with damasked satin and enriched with a frieze between the cornice and architrave; and the ceiling is coffered and panelled, and the carved-work in each panel is gilded. Adjoining it is the drawing-room. Two female figures, copied from antique canephore, uphold the marble mantel-piece; and the dado and other woodwork, the ceilings and the walls, are treated with the same sumptuousness as those of the saloon. The utmost harmony of tone prevails. Beyond the drawing-room, in the adjoining tower, is the dining-room, which covers the site of the dining-hall built by Henry de Percy. The art of the Italian carver and his school of English and Scottish assistants, who were engaged for some years in perfecting this re-embellishment, is seen in this apartment to more advantage than in the others, as their work in the superb ceiling, the dado, doors and window-shutters, is left, uncoloured and ungilded, in the natural tints of the pine and cedar and walnut woods employed. The great marble mantel-piece is supported by a bacchante and fawn, and is sculptured with the arms of the fourth Duke and his Duchess.

Over and above these constructional enrichments, and the lustre of the marbles, and splendour of gold and colours, all these apartments are adorned with paintings by some of the most gifted of the old masters, by superb mirrors, gilded chairs and inlaid cabinets and tables, soft-piled carpets, and innumerable artistic elegances. The chapel is within easy access of them; and has been made noteworthy by the mosaic-work known as *Opus Alexandrum*. There are other apartments of similar Italian presentment that are admirable, one of which, especially a boudoir,

is treated with still more lavishness of costliness.

The kitchens, which adjoin the line of circumvallation, bring us back to old associations again. Opposite the huge open fire, which consumes a ton of coal at a time, hangs the great dish for the baron of beef, which, preceded by a ducal piper playing *Chevy Chase* on the Northumbrian pipes, is placed upon the banquet-table on grand occasions. Around are all the appliances modern ingenuity has been able to invent to further the most artistic preparation of food. The principal kitchen is about thirty-four feet square; and the walls, floor, and lantern-shaped roof are built of stone in the old mediæval manner. There is a great hydraulic roasting-jack; and steam is made to take several parts in the necessary operations. There is another kitchen where vegetables only are prepared; and there are also a pastry kitchen, larders for meat, fish, game, stock, and a plucking-room. Lifts are used to lessen labour. Below the kitchens are huge vaults for coals and lifts for them. Along the same side of the bailey are the numerous offices required for the conduct of the business of the estate; and near them is the four-faced clock tower.

The centuries; the number of sovereigns who have passed under the gateway and dismounted in the courtyard to partake of hospitality; the ancient Percies, and the times their warriors were brought home dead; the celebrities who visited it in the days of the first Duke and Duchess; as well as the reputations of the artists, scholars, and antiquaries engaged upon the most recent alterations and decorations, have combined to invest this northern lion with an interest that the passing of years can only enhance. Ever and anon great gatherings are held in it that in their turn impart fresh associations. Twenty-five years ago, when the present Earl Percy came of age, there was a week of rejoicing with fêtes and feasts; and now History has repeated itself with similar expressions of joy and gladness on the coming of age of his eldest son, Lord Warkworth.

THE IVORY GATE.*

By WALTER BESANT.

CHAPTER XIX.—THE PRODIGAL AT HOME.

IN the morning, Elsie rose at seven and put together such things as she would want for the three weeks before her marriage, if she was to spend that interval under her brother's care. At eight o'clock she received her letters—including one in a handwriting she did not know. She opened it. 'DEAR ELSIE,' it said, 'come to me at once. Come early. Come to breakfast at nine. I will wait for you till ten, or any time. —Your affectionate brother, ATHELSTAN.'

'Oh!' she murmured. 'And I did not know his writing. And to think that I am twenty-one, and he is thirty-one; and that I have never had a letter from him before!'

Her boxes were packed. She put on her jacket

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and hat and descended into the breakfast-room, where her mother was already opening her letters and waiting breakfast.

'You are going out, Elsie?' she asked coldly.

'Yes. Hilda told you, I suppose, what she came here for yesterday. In fact, you sent me a message.'

'I hope she delivered it correctly.'

'She said that you would not sanction my wedding while this charge, or suspicion, was hanging over George's head. And that you would not see him until it was withdrawn or cleared away.'

'Certainly. In such a case it would be worse than hypocrisy to receive him with friendliness.'

'Then, like Hilda, you accept the conclusion.'

'I am unable to do anything else. The conclusion seems to me inevitable. If not, let him explain. I hope that no time will be lost in bringing the formal charge. It is foolish kindness—real cruelty—to all concerned to keep such a thing hanging over our heads. I say *our* heads, not yours only, Elsie, because you know your brother is implicated—perhaps the real contriver—of the dreadful scheme.'

'Would you believe me if I were to tell you that Athelstan *could* not be implicated?'

'My dear—believe you? Of course, I would believe if I could. Unfortunately, the evidence is too great.'

Elsie sighed. 'Very well; I will say nothing more. You have driven out my lover, as you drove out my brother for the self-same cause, and on the self-same charge. I follow my lover and my brother.'

'Elsie!'—her mother started. 'Do not, I pray you, do anything rash. Remember—a scandal—a whisper even—may be fatal to you hereafter. Sit down and wait. All I ask you to do is to wait.'

'No; I will not wait. If those two are under any cloud of suspicion, I too will sit under the cloud and wait until it lifts. I am going to stay with my brother until my wedding. That is to be on the 12th.'

'No—no—my poor child. There will be no wedding on the 12th.'

'Before that time, everything will be cleared up, and I shall be married from this house, so that I have left all my things, my presents—everything.'

Her mother shook her head.

'Try not to think so cruelly of George and of Athelstan, mother. You will be sorry afterwards. Try to believe that though a case may look strange, there may be a way out.'

'I have told you'—her mother was perfectly cold and unmoved—'that I have come to this conclusion on the evidence. If the young man can explain things, let him do so. There will be no wedding on the 12th—Elsie. You can come home as soon as you are convinced that your brother is an improper person for a young lady to live with, and as soon as you have learned the truth about the other young man. That is to say, I will receive you under these distressing circumstances, provided there has been no scandal connected with your name.'

Elsie turned and left the room. The fifth commandment enjoins that under such circum-

stances as these the least said the soonest mended.

When a man learns that his sister, his favourite sister, from whom he has been parted for eight years, the only member of his family who stood up for him when he was falsely accused of a disgraceful thing, is about to take breakfast with him, he naturally puts as much poetry into that usually simple meal as circumstances allow. Mostly Athelstan took a cup of coffee and a London egg. This morning he had flowers, raspberries lying in a bed of leaves, a few late strawberries, various kinds of comfitures in dainty dishes, toast and cake, with fish and cutlets—quite a little feast. And he had had the room cleared of the bundles of newspapers: the pipes and cigar cases and all the circumstances of tobacco were hidden away—all but the smell, which lingered. One thinks a good deal about a sister's visit, under such conditions. At a quarter past nine Elsie arrived. Athelstan hastened to open the door, and to receive her with open arms and kisses strange and sweet. Then, while the people of the house took in her luggage, he led his sister into the room, which was the front room on the ground-floor.

'Elsie!' he said, taking both her hands in his, 'eight years since we parted—and you are a tall young lady whom I left a little girl. To hold your hand—to kiss you, seems strange after so long.' He kissed her again on the forehead. She looked up at the tall handsome man with a kind of terror. It was almost like casting herself upon the care of a strange man.

'I remember your voice, Athelstan, but not your face. You have changed more than I, even.'

'And I remember your voice, Elsie—always a soft and winning voice, wasn't it?—to suit soft and winning ways. There never was any child more winning and affectionate than you—never.'

'Oh! you are grown very handsome, Athelstan. See what a splendid beard, and the brown velvet jacket, and white waistcoat—and the crimson tie. You look like an artist. I wish all men wore colours, as they used to do. I only heard yesterday that you were in London. Hilda told me.'

'Was that the reason why you cannot stay at home?'

'Part of the reason. But you shall have breakfast first. You can take me in without any trouble?'

'My dear child, I am more than delighted to have you here. There is a room at the back where you will be quiet: we have only this one room for sitting-room, and I think we shall find it best to go out every day to dinner. That will not hurt us, and George will come every evening. —Now, Elsie, you sit here, and I will— No—I quite forgot. You will pour out the tea. Yes—I see. I thought I was going to wait upon you altogether.—There—now you will make a good breakfast, and—and— Don't cry, dear child.'

'No—Athelstan.' She brushed away the tears. 'It is nothing. I shall be very happy with you. But why are you not at home? And why am I here? Oh! it is too cruel—too perverse of them!'

'We had better have it out before breakfast, there.—Strawberries don't go well with tears, do they? Nor jam with complainings. Come, Elsie, why need you leave home?'

'Because, in two words, they are treating George as they treated you. I was younger then, or I would have gone away with you.'

'Treating George? Oh! I understand. They are pouring suspicion upon him. Well, I saw that this was coming. Old Checkley, I swear, is at the bottom of this.'

'Yes—Checkley went to Sir Samuel with the "Case," as he called it, complete. He proved to their joint satisfaction that nobody could have done the thing except George, assisted by you.'

'Oh! assisted by me.'

'Yes—while you were in California, I suppose. There is to be a warrant for your arrest—yours and George's—in a few days, they say. Hilda brought the news to my mother. They both believe it, and they want me to break off my engagement. My mother refuses to see George so long as this charge, as she calls it, remains over him. So I came away.'

'You did wisely. Well—any one may call up a cloud of suspicion, and it is sometimes difficult to disperse such a cloud. Therefore, we must do everything we can to find out who is the real criminal.—Now, let us rest quite easy. There can be no arrest—or any charge—or anything but a fuss created by this old villain. It is only troublesome to find one's own people so ready to believe.'

'Why did you not tell me that you were home again?'

'Pour out the coffee, Elsie, and begin your breakfast. I wanted to reserve the Return of the Prodigal until you came home after your honeymoon. Then I meant to call mysteriously about sunset, before George was home. I thought I would have a long cloak wrapped about me. I should have begun: "Madam: you had once a brother."—"I had"—that is you.—"On his deathbed."—"My brother dead?"—"that's you."—"With this packet."—Oh! we have lost a most beautiful little play. How can I forgive you?'

Then they went on with breakfast, talking and laughing until, before the meal was finished, they had lost their shyness and were brother and sister again.

After breakfast, Athelstan took a cigarette and an easy-chair. 'Now I am going to devote the whole day to you. I have nothing to do for my paper which cannot wait till to-morrow. All this morning we will talk—that is, until we are tired. We will have lunch somewhere, and go to see the pictures. George will come at about seven: we will have dinner, and go to the Naval Exhibition. Then we will get home, and have another talk. To-morrow, I shall have to leave you to your own devices between ten and six or so. I am very busy some days; on others, I can find time for anything.—Now that's all cleared up. I am to be your banker and everything.'

'Not my banker, Athelstan. Oh! you don't know. I am a great heiress.'

'Indeed? How is that?' he asked, a little twinkle in his eye.

'Mr Dering told me when I was twenty-one,

three weeks ago. Somebody has given me an immense sum of money—thirteen thousand pounds.'

'That is a very handsome sum. Who gave it to you?'

'That is a secret. Mr Dering refuses to tell me. I wish I knew.'

'I wouldn't wish if I were you. Gratitude is at all times a burden and a worry. Besides, he might be a vulgar person without aspirates or aspirations. Much better not inquire after him. Thirteen thousand pounds at three and a half per cent. means four hundred and fifty pounds a year. A nice little addition to your income. I congratulate you, Elsie; and this evening we will drink the health of the unassuming benefactor; the retiring and nameless recogniser of maidenly worth. Bless him!'

'And now, Athelstan, begin your adventures. Tell me everything: from the day you left us till now. You cannot tell me too much or talk too long. Before you begin, ask any questions about my mother and Hilda that you want to ask. Then we can go on undisturbed.'

'I have no questions to ask about either. I have already ascertained from George that both are in good health, and that Hilda has married a man with an immense fortune. That is happiness enough for her, I hope.—Now, Elsie, I shall be tedious, I am afraid; but you shall hear everything.'

He began. It was such a narrative as thousands of young Englishmen have been able to tell during the last five-and-twenty years. The story of the young man with a few pounds in his pocket, no friends, no recommendations, and no trade. Athelstan landed at New York in this condition. He looked about for employment and found none. He hastened out of the crowded city: he went West, and got work in the business open to every sharp and clever man—that of journalism. He worked for one paper after another, getting gradually more and more West, until he found himself in San Francisco, where he was taken on by a great paper, which had now sent him over here as its London correspondent. That was all the story; but there were so many episodes in it, so many adventures, so many men whom he remembered, so many anecdotes cropping up, in this eight years' history of a man with an eye, a brain, and a memory, that it was long past luncheon-time when Athelstan stopped and said that he must carry on the next chapter at another time.

'That pile of dollars that you made over the silver mine, Athelstan—what became of them?'

'What became of them? Well, you see, Elsie, in some parts of the United States money vanishes as fast as it is made. All these dollars dropped into a deep hole of the earth, and were hopelessly lost.'

She laughed. 'You will tell me some day—when you please—how you lost that fortune. Oh! what a thing it is to be a man and to have all these adventures!—Now, Athelstan, consider—if it had not been for your bad fortune, you would never have had all this good fortune.'

'True. Yet the bad fortune came in such an ugly shape. There has been a black side to my history. How was I to tell people why I left

my own country? I could make no friends. At the first appearance of friendship, I had to become cold, lest they should ask me where I came from and why I left home.'

Elsie was silent.

They carried out part of their programme. They went to see the pictures—it was eight years since Athelstan had seen a picture—and after the pictures they walked in the Park. Then they went home and waited for George, who presently appeared. Then they went to one of the Regent Street restaurants and made a little feast. After this, Elsie asked them to come home and spend a quiet evening talking about things.

By common consent they avoided one topic. Edmund Gray was not so much as mentioned, nor was the malignity of Checkley alluded to. They talked of old days, when Athelstan was a big boy and George a little boy and Elsie a child. They talked of the long engagement, and the hopeless time, when it seemed as if they were going to marry on two hundred pounds a year: and of that day of miracle and marvel when Mr Dering gave to one of them a fortune, and to the other a partnership. They talked of their honeymoon and the tour they were going to make, and the beautiful places they would see. Tours and Blois, Chenonceaux and Amboise; Angoulême and Poitiers and La Rochelle; and of their return, and the lovely flat, where the friends would be made so welcome. Athelstan was a person of some sympathy. Elsie talked as freely to him as she could to George. They talked till midnight.

Then Elsie got up. 'Whatever happens, Athelstan,' she said, 'mind—whatever happens, you shall give me away on the 12th.'

'Now she has left us,' said George, 'you may tell me why she refused to stay at home.'

'Well—I suppose you ought to know. Much for the same reason that I refused to stay at home. They then chose to jump at the conclusion that at one step I had become from a man of honour, a stupid and clumsy forger. They now choose—I am ashamed to say—my mother and sister choose—to believe that you and I together have devised and invented this elaborate scheme of forgery. With this end in view, it has been found necessary to contrive certain little fabrications—as that I have been living in London on my wits—that is to say, by the exercise of cheaterly—for the last eight years; and that, being in rags and penniless, I persuaded you to join me in this neat little buccaneering job.'

'Oh! it is too absurd! But I suspected something. Well—it is perfectly easy to put a stop to that.'

'Yes, it is easy. At the same time, it will be well to put a stop to it as soon as possible, before the thing assumes serious proportions, and becomes a horrid thing, that may stick to you all your life. You have got to do with a malignant man—perhaps a desperate man. He will spread abroad the suspicion as diligently as he can. Let us work, therefore.'

'Well—but what can we do, that we have not done? How can we fix the thing upon Checkley?'

'I don't know. We must think—we must find out something, somehow. Let us all three

work together. Elsie will make the best detective in the world. And let us work in secret. I am very glad—very glad indeed—that Elsie came.'

DETECTION OF CRIME BY PHOTOGRAPHY.

BY T. C. HEPPWORTH.

THE detection of crime is a matter of fascinating interest to all but those who, unhappily for themselves, have to pay the penalty of wrong-doing. The novelist as well as the dramatist knows well that a crime round which a mystery hangs, or which involves the detection or pursuit of a suspected individual, is a theme which will at once secure the attention of those for whom he caters. In one respect it is a misfortune that this should be so, for there has arisen a copious supply of gutter literature, which, by its stories of wonderful escapes, and lawless doings of notorious thieves and other vagabonds, arouses the emulation of youthful readers, and often, as the records of our police courts too frequently prove, tempts them to go and do likewise. On the other hand, we cannot look without admiration at such a wonderful word-picture as that given us in *Oliver Twist*, where the wretched Sikes wanders with the brand of Cain upon him, haunted by the visionary form of his victim.

Both novelists and playwrights have many clever ways of tracking their puppets and hounding them to death. Some of these are hackneyed enough, such as the footmark in the soil, the dirty thumb-mark on the paper, &c.; and he who can conceive a new way of bringing about the inevitable detection is surely half-way towards success.

Once, again, has romance been beaten by reality. In this matter of the detection of criminals the Photographic Camera has lately performed such novel feats, that quite a fresh set of ideas is placed at the disposal of fiction-mongers. The subject recently came before the Photographic Society of Great Britain in the form of a paper by Dr Paul Jeserich of Berlin, a chemist, who has devoted his attention for many years to the detection of crime by scientific means, and more especially by means of photography. This paper was illustrated by a remarkable collection of photographs, which were projected by means of an optical lantern. Some of the wonderful results obtained by this indefatigable worker we will now briefly place before our readers.

Most persons are aware that for many years it has been the practice in this and other countries to take the portraits of criminals when they become the unwilling tenants of the State, and such photographs have proved most useful in subsequent identification. There is little doubt, thinks Dr Jeserich, that this system might with advantage be extended to the photographing of

the scene of a crime, for the camera will faithfully record little details, at the time considered to be unimportant, but which may supply a valuable link in the chain of evidence later on. Thus, he refers to a case of murder, when, in the course of a terrible struggle, the contents of a room were upturned, a clock, among other things, being hurled from its place and stopped. A photograph would have shown the hour at which the deed was done, a fact of first importance, as every prisoner who has endeavoured to establish an alibi knows well enough. But it is in microscopical examination, and in the subsequent photographing of the object examined in much magnified form, that Dr Jeserich has done his most noteworthy work. Such a photograph will often afford evidence of the most positive kind, which can be readily comprehended and duly appraised by judge and jury alike. Let us now see, by a few examples, how the method works out.

The first criminal case brought forward by Dr Jeserich was one in which the liberty of a suspected man literally 'hung upon a hair,' for by a single hair was he tracked. The case was one of assault, and two men were suspected of the deed. A single hair was found on the clothing of the victim, and this hair was duly pictured in the form of a photo-micrograph. (It may be as well, perhaps, to point out here that by this term is meant the enlarged image of a microscopic object, the term micro-photograph being applied to those tiny specks of pictures which can only be seen when magnified in a microscope.) A, one of the suspected men, had a gray beard, and a hair from his chin was photographed and compared with the first picture taken. The difference in structure, tint, and general appearance was so marked that the man was at once liberated. The hair of the other man, B, was also examined, and bore little resemblance to that found on the victim. This latter was now more carefully scrutinised, and compared with other specimens. The photograph clearly showed for one thing that the hair was pointed; it had never been cut. Gradually the conclusion was arrived at that it belonged to a dog, 'an old yellow, smooth-haired, and comparatively short-haired dog.' Further inquiry revealed the fact that B owned such a dog, a fresh hair from which agreed in every detail with the original photograph; and the man was convicted. He subsequently confessed that he alone had committed the crime.

In the identification of blood stains, several difficulties crop up. As every one knows, blood when magnified is found to contain myriads of little globules, or corpuscles as they are commonly called. Some of these are colourless; but the others are red, and give to blood its well-known colour. The microscopist can tell whether the blood which he submits to examination is that of a mammal, of a bird, or of a fish, for the corpuscles of each have distinct characteristics. But when we ask him to differentiate between the blood-corpuscles of different kinds of mammals, he is somewhat at a loss, because his only guide is that of size. Thus, the blood-corpuscles of the elephant are, as might be expected, larger than those of any of the other

mammalia. But they are in other respects like those of his brother mammal Man: round in outline, and looking like so many coins carelessly thrown together. A dog or a pig possesses corpuscles of smaller size, while those of the goat are very much smaller still. Here is a case in which these differences witnessed with terrible effect against a man suspected of a serious crime. A murder had been committed, and D was the man suspected; suspicion being strengthened by the circumstance that an axe belonging to him was found smeared with blood, which had been partly wiped off. The man denied his guilt, and accounted for the blood-stained weapon, which he declared he had not taken the trouble to wipe, by saying that he had that day killed a goat with it. The blood was examined microscopically, and the size of the corpuscles proved his statement to be false. A photo-micrograph of it, as well as one of goat's blood, was prepared for comparison by the judge and jury. Another photo-micrograph was also made from part of the blade of the axe, which showed very clearly by unmistakable streaks that the murderer had done his best to remove the traces of his crime. It is certain that these photographs must be far more useful for purposes of detection than the original microscopic preparations from which they are taken, for it requires a certain education of the eye to see through a microscope properly, and still more to estimate the value of the evidence it offers. It is certain, too, that counsel on either side would see through the microscope with very different eyes.

We now come to a very important section of Dr Jeserich's work, the detection of falsification of handwriting and figures by means of photography. Crimes of this nature are far more common than deeds of violence, and, judging by the heavy punishment meted out to the offenders in comparison with the mild sentences often passed upon men whom to call brutes would be base flattery, the law would seem to consider such sins worse than those committed against the person. However this may be, it is a most important thing that this very dangerous class of crime should be subject to ready detection. The microscope alone will not help us much, although we can detect by its aid places in paper where erasures have been made. If any one will take the trouble to examine microscopically the paper on which these words are printed, using quite a low-power object glass, he will note that its smooth surface altogether disappears, and that it seems to be as coarse as blanket. This being the case, it will be readily understood that an erasure with a knife which would be imperceptible to the unaided eye becomes so exaggerated when viewed with the microscope that there can be no mistake about it. In examining writing by this searching aid to vision, the finest lines appear thick and coarse. It is also possible to ascertain whether an alteration has been made in a word before the ink first applied has become dry, or whether the amendment has been an after-thought. In the former case the previously applied ink will more or less amalgamate with and run into the other, as will be clearly seen under the microscope; while in the latter case, each ink-mark will preserve its own unbroken outline. The use of this observation in cases of

suspected wrong-doing is obvious. Dr Jeserich shows two photographs which illustrate these differences. In the first, a document dated early in January is marked 1884—the 4 having been altered into a 5 as soon as written—so as to correct a mistake which most of us make a dozen times or more at the beginning of each new year. In the other picture the date had been altered fraudulently and long after the original words had been traced, in order to gain some unworthy advantage.

The photographic plates by which these records have been accomplished are the ordinary gelatine plates which are being used in the present day by thousands of amateur workers. By special preparation, these plates can be made to afford evidence of a far more wonderful kind, and can in certain cases be made to yield a clear image of writing which has been completely covered with fresh characters by the hand of the forger. In this way the true and the false are distinctly revealed together with the peculiarities belonging to each clearly defined.

The word 'ordinary' has special significance to photographers, and is used by them in contradistinction to a colour-sensitive (orthochromatic) plate. This second kind of sensitive surface is of comparatively recent date, and the great advantage in its use is that it renders colours in their relative shade-values to one another. An 'ordinary' plate will photograph blue as white, and yellow and red as black. But a colour-sensitive plate will render these colours more according to their relative brightness; just, in fact, as an engraver would express them by different depths of 'tint.' These plates are especially useful in photographing coloured objects, such as paintings in oil or water-colour. Dr Jeserich has, however, pointed out an entirely new use for them, and has shown that they will differentiate between black inks of different composition.

The oft-quoted line, 'Things are not always as they seem,' is very true of what we call black ink. It is generally not black, although it assumes that appearance on paper. Taking, for experiment, the black inks made by three different manufacturers, and dropping a little of each into a test-tube half full of water, the writer found that one was distinctly blue, another red, and the third brown. Each was an excellent writing fluid, and looked as black as night when applied to paper. Now, Dr Jeserich prepares his colour-sensitive plates in such a way that they will reveal a difference in tone between inks of this description, while an ordinary plate is powerless to do anything of the kind. Among other examples, he shows the photograph of a certain bill of exchange whereon the date for payment is written April. The drawer of this bill had declared that it was not payable until May; whereupon Dr Jeserich photographed it a second time with a colour-sensitive plate. The new photograph gives a revelation of the true state of affairs. The word 'Mai' has been altered to April by a little clever manipulation of the pen, and the fraud was not evident to the eye, to the microscope, or to the ordinary photographic process. But the colour-sensitive film tells us that the ink with which the original word 'Mai' was written was of a different black hue from that employed by the forger when he wrote over it

and partly formed out of it the word 'April.' The consequence is that one word is much fainter than the other, each stroke of alteration being plainly discernible, and detecting the forgery. Another case is presented where a bill already paid, let us say, in favour of one Schmidt, is again presented with the signature Fabian. Here, again, the photographic evidence shows in the most conclusive manner that the first word is still readable under the altered conditions. In this case, when the accused was told that by scientific treatment the first name had been thus revealed, he confessed to the fraud, and was duly punished.

Alterations in figures have naturally come under Jeserich's observation, figures being, as a rule, far more easy to tamper with than words, especially where careless writers of cheques leave blank spaces in front of numerals to tempt the skill of those whose ways are crooked. Dr Jeserich shows a document which is drawn apparently for a sum of money represented by the figures 20,200. The amount was disputed by the payer, and hence the document was submitted to the photographic test. As a result it was found that the original figures had been 1,200—and that the payee had altered the first figure to 0, and had placed a 2 in front of it. The result to him was four years' penal servitude; and it is satisfactory to note that after sentence had been passed upon him, he confessed that the photograph had revealed the truth.

Two cases in which fabrication of documents was rendered evident by the camera are of a somewhat amusing nature, although one might think it difficult to find matter for mirth out of these mendacious doings. Two citizens of Berlin had been summoned for non-payment of taxes, and had quite forgotten the day upon which the summonses were returnable, thus rendering themselves liable to increased expenses. It was a comparatively easy matter, and one which evidently did not lie very heavily on their consciences, to alter the 24 which denoted the day of the month into 26. But that terrible photographic plate found them out, and the small fine which they hoped to evade was superseded in favour of imprisonment for the grave offence of falsifying an official document. In another case a receipt for debts contracted up to 1881 was altered to 1884 by the simple addition of two strokes in an ink which was of a different photographic value from the ink which had been used by the author of the document.

Many cases like these, relating to falsification of wills, postal orders, permits, and other documents, have come under the official notice of Dr Jeserich. One of these is especially noteworthy because the accused was made to give evidence against himself in a novel manner. He was a cattle-dealer, and had altered a permit for passing animals across the Austrian frontier at a time when the prevalence of disease necessitated a certain period for quarantine. The photographic evidence showed that a 3 had been added to the original figures, and it was necessary to ascertain whether the prisoner had inserted this numeral. To do this he was made to write several 3's, and these were photographed on a film of gelatine. This transparent film was now placed over the impounded document, and it was found that any

of the images of the newly-written figures would very nicely fit over the disputed 3 on the paper. Such a test as this, it is obvious, is far more conclusive and satisfactory in every way than the somewhat doubtful testimony of experts in handwriting, the actual value of whose evidence was so clearly set forth during the celebrated Parnell inquiry.

It is refreshing to turn to an instance in which the photographic evidence had the effect, not of convicting a person, but of clearing him from suspicion. The dead body of a man was found near the outskirts of a wood, and appearances indicated that he had been the victim of foul-play. An acquaintance of his had been arrested on suspicion; and a vulcanite match-box believed to belong to the accused—an assertion which, however he denied—seemed to strengthen the case against him. The box was then subjected to careful examination. It was certainly the worse for wear, for its lid was covered with innumerable scratches. Amid these markings it was thought that there were traces of a name, but what that name was it was quite impossible to guess. Dr Jeserich now took the matter in hand, and rubbed the box with a fine impalpable powder, which insinuated itself into every crevice. He next photographed the box while a strong side-light was thrown upon its surface so as to show up every depression, when the name of its owner stood plainly revealed. This was not that of the prisoner, but belonged to a man who had dropped the box near the spot where it was found many weeks before the suspected crime had been committed. The accused was at once released.

In conclusion, we may quote one more case of identification which, although it does not depend upon the camera, is full of interest, and is associated with that other wonderful instrument known as the spectroscope. Solutions of log-wood, carmine, and blood have to the eye exactly the same appearance; but when the liquids are examined by the spectroscope, absorption bands are shown which have for each liquid a characteristic form. In the case of blood the character of the absorption bands alters if the liquid be associated with certain gases, such as those which are given off during the combustion of carbonaceous material. Now, let us see how this knowledge was applied in a case which came under Dr Jeserich's official scrutiny. A cottage was burned down, and the body of its owner was found in the ruins in such a charred condition that he was hardly recognisable. A relative was, in consequence of certain incriminating circumstances, suspected of having murdered the man, and then set fire to the building in order to hide every trace of his crime, thinking, no doubt, that the conflagration would be ascribed to accident. The dead body was removed, and a drop or two of blood was taken from the lungs and examined spectroscopically, with a view to finding out whether death had been caused by suffocation or had taken place, as was believed, before the house was set on fire. The absorption spectrum was found to be that of normal blood, and the suspicion against the accused was thus strengthened. He ultimately confessed to having first committed the murder, and then set fire to the building, according to the theory adopted by

the prosecution. The proverb tells us that 'the way of transgressors is hard.' The thanks of the law abiding are due to Dr Jeserich for making it harder still.

MAJOR RANDALL'S WARNING.

PART III.—CONCLUSION.

MAJOR RANDALL only remained a few days at the Hall, having a large circle of friends to visit before returning to his military duties in India. There was to be a week's hunting at one place, a week's shooting at another; then a stay with former brother-officers at Woolwich and Aldershot, lastly, to his married sister in Worcestershire. Sir Philip and Lady Hartbury were rich, spending their money freely, as wealthy people ought to do. They entertained largely. A country seat with a succession of staying guests is charming; at least the Major found it so after his long sojourn in the East, and for the time he quite gave himself up to the enjoyment of English home-life and society. He was a general favourite, being bright, agreeable, fine-looking, and an amusing *raconteur* of Indian adventures; unmarried, on the verge of forty. Now forty is really an excellent age in a man; for he is experienced, as clever perhaps as he will ever be; the glamour of youth with its rose-tinted atmosphere has departed, and he sees his fellow-men with plain black and white outlines, yet is still young enough to enjoy life. Such was Major Randall.

There were few ladies who would have refused him had he made proposals of marriage; but he was not a marrying man; an early disappointment—through death—had caused him to relinquish that idea for ever.

There were frequent dinner-parties at the Hall, and occasional dances; the time passed swiftly and pleasantly. Several times he attempted to take his departure, but had been induced to stay on by his sister and brother-in-law's solicitations. At last he terminated his visit in a very unexpected manner. One night, after a musical evening, or home concert, in which the Major had distinguished himself—for he had a pleasant barytone voice, and sang ballads nicely—he retired to rest about eleven o'clock, in a happy enough state of mind, such as people feel who have done their best and been appreciated. He went to sleep at once, and slept for two hours, when he awoke with a start: some one was speaking to him. Raising himself upon his elbow, he gazed round the room, dimly visible by a tiny night-light. There was no one there, and nothing disturbed. Yet a voice had said distinctly: 'Go to Lincoln.'

Had he dreamt it? If so, why dream of Lincoln, where he knew no one? Composing himself to sleep again for about another two hours, once more he was suddenly awakened with a greater shock, for again the voice repeated closer to him and most impressively: 'Go to Lincoln.' This time the Major got up and thoroughly searched the room. He had locked the door, so no one could enter that way. The house was hushed in profound repose, not a sound, save the dull ticking of a clock at the end of the corridor.

Major Randall was extremely discomposed. He was not a superstitious man by any means; but there was a tone in that voice that penetrated to his very soul with a thrill through his system such as he had never before experienced.

'Dreams are strange things,' he said to himself; 'why should I dream of Lincoln, where I have not been half-a-dozen times in my life, and that twenty years ago?'

Again he got into bed, but not to sleep, for his nerves were too much excited. He tried to lose himself in vain; his mind was so thoroughly awake and clear, that—as he afterwards declared—he could have written any letters or despatches as well as ever he did in his life.

He lay thus, quite still, on his back, with wide-open eyes, when he was electrified by the same voice saying close to his ear: 'Go to Lincoln—at once!'

'I will,' answered the Major aloud; and springing up, he lighted the tapers on the toilet table and began to dress. Consulting his watch, he found it was four o'clock in the morning; and looking from the window which gave a view over the park, he saw a clear starlit sky and a white frost on the grass. Writing a short note of explanation to his brother-in-law, Sir Philip, he placed it on the outside handle of his door, in order that it might be seen by the servants at an early hour.

'He will think I am cracked; I hope I am not, for really I am going to Lincoln without knowing why,' he soliloquised as he noiselessly descended the broad staircase. The Hall door was so barricaded by its manifold fastenings of bars, bolts, and chains, that he could not undo them without alarming the household; he therefore entered a conservatory opening from the drawing-room, and unlocking a glass door, let himself out into the park, traversing it without encountering a keeper, but disturbing the deer clustered together under the bare branches of the fine elms and beeches, who started up from their lair, gazing at him in wonder.

Major Randall rather enjoyed his tramp to Worcester in the bracing air of a fine frosty morning. He reached the station in time to take a cup of coffee and a sandwich before starting by the six o'clock train. Being an experienced traveller, he arranged his long journey so well, that, changing at one junction in order to catch the express at another, he was enabled to reach Lincoln by two o'clock. After enjoying a luncheon, he strolled through the hilly street of that interesting old city.

'Why am I here, I wonder?' he kept repeating to himself. 'Shall I have further orders?'

But though he listened attentively, no voice spoke again. He surveyed the exterior of the fine cathedral, and looked in the shop windows, wandering without any definite object. The town was unusually full of people, who seemed in a state of excitement. The winter assizes were on. Not knowing how to occupy his time, he stepped into the courthouse, where a trial was taking place. The entrance was blocked with people.

'What case is on?' he inquired of a policeman.

'A young man is being tried for his life, sir—it's a murder.'

'Of whom?'

'Mr Twyford, the miller at Roby, as was shot on the road between Merstoke and his house—pore old gentleman.'

Major Randall recalled the sad affair that had happened the night of his arrival at the Miss Ingestres': in his succession of visits and amusements it had escaped his memory.

'I will go in, if you can get me a place,' said he, slipping silver into the policeman's hand. This talisman and his fine military appearance gained him an admission which had been refused to many others. Through some private interest he possessed, the officer succeeded in not only introducing him into the body of the court but procuring him a good seat.

The interior was densely packed, and its heat was great, for the trial had lasted some hours. The accused was a young man of about four-and-twenty years of age, tall, fair, and handsome, but pale and worn by anxiety. The Major was sorry that he had not heard the case from its commencement; but from what he gleaned, the evidence was fearfully against the prisoner at the bar. To state it briefly: William Armstrong had been four years in Isaac Twyford's employment as foreman at the mill, when he was offered a higher salary and a house to live in by a corn-factor at Boston. The old miller was unwilling to part with him, and offered to raise his wages to those proposed by the corn-dealer; but young Armstrong declined. The chance of a house rent-free was a great inducement for the change, as it would enable him to marry a young girl to whom he was engaged. Unfortunately, his master did not take the refusal in good part, and thought him too young to get married. High words had followed, and a quarrel ensued.

Mr Twyford was well known and respected as a just man by all the country round; but it was also acknowledged that he was a severe one; still, he was not supposed to have any enemies; yet, within a week of his disagreement with Armstrong, he was shot dead on the high-road leading from Merstoke to Grantham, beside which his mill was situated. He had been the best part of the day at Merstoke transacting business, but had unexpectedly been detained until late; indeed, it was nearly half-past six when he quitted the Crown Inn on his starting for home.

Many persons had heard the old man call his foreman hard names—ungrateful, time-server, and such-like—and had seen Armstrong leave the mill in anger. Other witnesses from Boston deposed that he possessed pistols and a fowling-piece, which he had been cleaning and using recently. Some had met him at ten o'clock on the night of the murder, looking wet and fagged. Mr Twyford's housekeeper stated that in the afternoon of that day Armstrong had come over from Boston saying he particularly wished to see her master and apologise to him for the hasty words he had used: it pained him to be at variance with the old miller, who had formerly treated him with kindness. He appeared disappointed when she told him that Mr Twyford had gone to Merstoke for the day, making many inquiries as to the time of his return, also saying he had half a mind to go and meet him; whether he did so or not she could not say. Soon after he left, it began to rain.

Another witness was the carrier, who met him, and exchanged a few words on the Merstoke road; it was then raining fast.

The prisoner had pleaded not guilty. What the witnesses had stated was correct. Upon hearing that the miller had ridden over to Merstoke, he started to meet him; but the rain fell so fast, he turned back. Unfortunately, he missed the train, and was obliged to walk the whole distance to Boston, where he arrived greatly fatigued and very wet. It was a great shock to him when he was arrested the following day, charged with the murder of his former employer.

It was seven o'clock when Mr Twyford was shot; the woman at the roadside cottage stated that her timepiece struck that hour just before she heard the report of the pistol.

'I am innocent,' the prisoner said solemnly. 'Appearances are fearfully against me; but I would never raise my hand against Mr Twyford. We were not on good terms; still, there was no malice on either side. I was not near Merstoke high-road at the time of the murder, but in a directly opposite direction, seven miles away from it, going home. There is one person, the only one in the world, who could prove it. Who he is, I do not know. I overtook him on the way. It was pitch dark; the rain came down in torrents, and we took shelter for a time in the porch of Bertoft old church, and exchanged a few words. Of course we could not see each other. That stranger could testify the fact of my presence there—though perhaps he has forgotten it.'

'No; he has not,' rang out Major Randall's clear voice. 'He is here.'

In the midst of great excitement, the Major pushed his way through the crowd to the witness-box. He now saw *why* he had been sent to Lincoln.

Thus, at the eleventh hour, William Armstrong's character was vindicated to the world, his statement fully corroborated by a witness of irreproachable integrity. Clearly and circumstantially the Major related how he was walking from the small station to Cressing Hall, and had been overtaken by a fellow-pedestrian, seeking shelter with him for a short time in the old church porch—the clock striking seven while there; also the conversation they had held together in the dark—of how the prisoner's grandfather had during a flood rowed in a boat to make his purchases at the village shop, and shot wild-ducks in the fields of Bertoft—facts which a stranger could not possibly have known.

William Armstrong was discharged, and a reward of a hundred pounds at once offered for the apprehension of the actual murderer.

Sir Philip and Lady Hartbury were quite prepared to quiz their brother unmercifully on his wildgoose chase, when he returned; but when they heard its result, speedily changed their intention, listening almost in awe to his recital.

Major Randall never heard the voice again, and declares, in spite of the general opinion to the contrary, that it was *not* a dream.

To do Mrs Drew justice, she was greatly shocked at her uncle's tragic death and poor Elizabeth's sudden decease, but triumphed in the expectation of inheriting the miller's property, its amount proving greater than expected. She

contemplated removing to a country-house, keeping a pony phaeton and giving garden-parties, to let the county families see she could hold up her head as high as any of them. But behold! when the time came for legal settlement, no certificate of her parents' marriage could be found—no entry in registers. Alas! Mrs Drew was illegitimate.

'Pride must have a fall,' exclaimed the town-folk.

She never again upbraided her husband with having 'no ambition.'

The miller's fortune went to very distant relations, who were advertised for in the papers.

A convict named Ashworth died at Portland. On his death-bed he confessed that he had shot his father-in-law on the road home, having learned from his wife that she was forgiven and would inherit the property. Her sudden death defeated him.

SORTES SACRÆ; OR, DIVINATION BY LOT.

THE practice of consulting certain books in order to discover the future is common to all people who have books more or less sacred. Among the Romans the Sibylline books were kept in a stone coffer under ground in the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol, under the custody of certain officers. They were consulted in the case of prodigies and calamities. The contents having been divulged by one of these men, he was put to death. When the temple in which they were preserved was burnt, 82 B.C., the Sibylline books perished in the fire. Then ambassadors were sent to various towns in Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor to collect any copies of these prophecies that might be preserved there.

A great number of spurious prophetic books circulated, pretending to be Sibylline oracles, and Augustus ordered that they should be collected and burnt. But other works were consulted for the purpose of peering into the future beside the Sibylline books. A favourite volume for such exploration was Virgil. The story is told of Hadrian, in the reign of Trajan, that being concerned as to the mood of the Emperor towards him and his own prospects, he consulted Virgil, and lit on the lines:

Who is he at a distance, with branches of olive adorned,
And bearing the hallowed vessels? I know the look of a king,
With locks and beard all hoary, the first to establish the city
With laws—from a humble village exalted a sovereign to be.

And when Alexander Severus, as a boy, consulted the same book, his finger rested on the line: 'To thee the empire will come of heaven and earth and the ocean.' The manner of inquiring is for the inquirer to open the book at random and apply the first passage that strikes the eye to the person's own immediate circumstances.

The story is well known of King Charles I. and Lord Falkland inquiring into the future in this manner before the battle of Newbury. The king, being at Oxford, went one day to see the

Bodleian Library, and was shown there, among other volumes, a Virgil, very handsomely bound. Lord Falkland, to divert the king, proposed that they should consult it as to an augury for the future; whereupon the king, opening the book, lit on Dido's imprecation, thus translated by Dryden:

Yet let a race untamed, and haughty foes
His peaceful entrance with dire arms oppose;
Oppressed with numbers in the unequal field,
His men discouraged and himself expelled;
Let him for succour sue from place to place,
Torn from his subjects and his son's embrace.
First let him see his friends in battle slain,
And their untimely fate lament in vain;
And when at length the cruel war shall cease,
On hard conditions may he buy his peace;
Nor let him then enjoy supreme command,
But fall untimely by some hostile hand,
And lie unburied on the barren strand.

It is said that King Charles seemed concerned at this accident, and that Lord Falkland, observing it, would likewise try his own fortune in the same manner. The place he stumbled upon was yet more suited to his destiny than the other had been to that of the king. It ran:

O Pallas! thou hast failed thy plighted word
To fight with caution, not to tempt the sword:
I warned thee, but in vain! for well I knew
What perils youthful ardour would pursue:
That boiling blood would carry thee too far,
Young as thou wert in dangers, raw in war;
O curst essay in arms—disastrous doom—
Prelude of bloody fields and fights to come.

Not long after this, King Charles was beheaded, and Lord Falkland fell in a skirmish he had rashly engaged in.

Such is the story as told by Dr Welwood; but, unfortunately, its authenticity is doubtful, as the same story is told by Aubrey of Prince Charles and the poet Cowley at Paris, just before the trial of the King.

Among the Mohammedans it is not unusual to consult in this manner the Koran and the poet Hafiz; and from an early period it was customary among Christians to employ the Bible for the same purpose. St Augustine mentions this as practised in his time, and hesitates about condemning it, so long as it was not applied to things of this world.

Gregory, Bishop of Tours in the sixth century, tells us what was his practice. He spent several days in fasting and prayer, after which he resorted to the tomb of St Martin, and taking any book of Scripture that lay at hand, he opened it, and accepted the first passage that met his eye as the answer to the query he put.

Another manner of consulting the sacred books for an answer consisted in accepting the first verse of a psalm or Scripture read or sung on entering a church during divine service, as the reply to the question in the mind. According to the Confessions of St Augustine it was this that determined the life of St Anthony. He was in hesitation as to his career, when, entering a church, he heard the deacon read the words: 'Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor—and come follow me.'

The practice, however, of consulting Scripture as a book of Fate was generally condemned by the Church. A council at Vannes pronounced against it in 461 A.D. So did one at Agde in 506,

and one at Auxerre in 585. Charles the Great forbade it in his Capitularies, and so did Pope Gregory II. Nevertheless, curiosity as to the future was so strong in men's minds that the custom continued. An odd circumstance is that the cathedral Chapter at Orleans in 1146 appealed to a prognostic of this sort in a supplication addressed by them to Pope Alexander III. against their bishop. At his consecration, when the Gospel was opened above his head, the finger of the deacon rested on the words, 'And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.' This was a token that the bishop, Elias, was to be turned out of his see.

The practice of observing the book when opened over the head of a prelate at his consecration was very common. It was thought that a sure augury could thence be drawn as to what sort of a bishop he would prove.

At the consecration of Athanasius, nominated to the patriarchate of Constantinople, a patriarchate which he stained with his crimes, 'the Bishop of Nicomedia having brought the Gospel,' says the Byzantine historian, 'the congregation prepared to take note of the oracle which would be manifest on the opening of the book, though this oracle is not infallibly true. The Bishop of Nicaea, noticing that he had lighted on the words, "Prepared for the devil and his angels," groaned in the depth of his heart, and putting up his hand to hide the words, turned over the leaves and disclosed the other words, "The birds of the air come and lodge in the branches;" words which seemed to have no connection with the ceremony.'

When Landri, Bishop of Laon, was consecrated, the Gospel for the day gave, 'A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also;' and a few years after he was assassinated. He was succeeded by the Dean of Orleans, at whose consecration the book was opened at a blank page; and, in fact, he died shortly after, without having done anything by which his pontificate could be marked.

In 391, when Evurtius desired to retire from the bishopric of Orleans from extreme old age, he assembled the clergy and bade them elect a successor by writing the names of their candidates on slips of paper and putting them into a box. A little child was enjoined to draw the lot, and the name drawn was Aignan. Evurtius was doubtful whether he were suitable, and advised the consultation of the sacred oracles—the Psalter, the Epistles, and lastly the Gospels. This was done. The Psalter was opened at haphazard, and the text at the head of the page was, 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosetest and receivest unto thee: he shall dwell in thy courts.' Then in like manner the Epistles were opened at random, and at the head of the page stood, 'Other foundation can no man lay than is laid.' In like manner the Gospel rendered the text, 'On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' After this, all doubts as to the suitability of Aignan to fill the episcopal throne ceased.

Guibert of Nogent, a writer of the twelfth century, who gives a very curious memoir of his own life, tells a story of himself, which shows that the same practice was in vogue at the installation of an abbot. 'On the day of my entry into the monastery,' he says, 'a monk who had

studied the sacred books desired, I presume, to read my future: at the moment when he was preparing to leave with the procession to meet me, he placed designedly on the altar the book of the Gospels, intending to draw an omen from the direction taken by my eyes towards this or that chapter. Now the book was written, not in pages, but in columns. The monk's eyes rested in the middle of the second column, where he read the following passage, "The light of the body is the eye." Then he bade the deacon who was to present the book to me to take care as soon as he had opened the book before me to note on what part of the pages my eyes rested. The deacon accordingly did so. Whilst he observed with curious eyes the direction taken by my glance, my eyes and spirit together turned neither above nor below, but precisely towards the verse which had been indicated before. The monk, who had sought to form conjectures by this, seeing that my action had accorded without premeditation with his intentions, came to me a few days after and told me what he had done, and how wondrously my first movement had coincided with his own.

The reader will probably agree with the writer of this article that Guibert and the monk must have been hard put to it to discover any oracle in the words, and with Bruno, Bishop of Segni, in the eleventh century, that the looking for such oracles is 'foolery.'

In 1191, Albert von Löwen was elected Bishop of Liège, and was consecrated in the following year. It was at a time of great discord, for there were two rival bishops claiming the see—the one nominated by the Emperor, and a second Albert. At the consecration, the two bishops who assisted the archbishop opened the Gospel before him, and he read the words, 'Herod had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison.' He hastily turned the page, and read, 'Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought.' Then the archbishop was troubled, and groaning in spirit, laid hold of Albert and said: 'My son, prepare thy soul for temptation, for thou shalt die the death of a martyr.' And in fact Albert was put to death within a few months of his consecration.

The eleventh chapter of Proverbs, which contains thirty-one verses, is often taken to give token of the character of a life. The manner of consulting it is simple; it is but to look for the verse answering to the day of the month on which the questioner was born. The answer will be found in most cases to be exceedingly ambiguous. For instance, the present Premier, the Marquis of Salisbury, was born on the 3d of January; the text for him accordingly will be, 'The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them;' which is no doubt appropriate enough from a Unionist point of view. But from the opposite point it would be regarded as most unsuitable. For 'General' Booth, born on the 10th of April, we have: 'When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting;' which is vague enough. Mr Gladstone, the 29th of December, gets, 'He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be

servant to the wise of heart;' which is also ambiguous.

A mode of taking the lot by Scripture, still in vogue among ignorant and superstitious people, is to put a key in the book, bind the book with twine so as to hold the key in place, and then suspend the Bible between two fingers under the key handle: to ask the question and see whether the key and book turn on the fingers and drop. This is, of course, entirely due to unconscious muscular action, which makes the book give that response which the interrogator desires.

A sacred book given for one purpose, by the perversity of man is used for another for which it was not intended; and it is hard to say whether the consultation of the *Sortes Sacre* is most silly or most profane.

DORIS AND I.

By JOHN E. STAFFORD.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

THERE was evil in front of us, and much aching of hearts and suffering. But the thrush sang in the sycamore tree, and the swallows curved and twittered all about us, and in the rich amber light we could see that all was fair and good; then our eyes would meet, and we thought not of evil, Doris and I. We spoke little, our hearts being very full and words mere idleness. Doris looked out again to the west, leaning her head against me, and taking my hand as it twined over her shoulder. We were in the orchard by the old green wicket, where a month ago, before the blossoms had burst their bulbs, she had allowed me to tell her an old tale, and had said one word of her own to give it finish. And as the thrush sang his love-song, and the sun sank to his bed behind the hills, I thought of then and now, and my head lowered and I kissed her forehead gently. Then Doris sighed as if a spell was broken. For I had come to tell of my wind-fall; that I was no longer a poor man; that instead of waiting for years, we might begin our married life on my return from Canada in three months or so; and the sudden happiness of the thing had wrapt us round and silenced us both. Now that the first flush of it was over, we remembered the fleeting minutes, and fell to talking. What we said is of no account here; but so little did we dream of harm, or accident of nature to cross our happiness, that not once did we mention *him*, though we knew he was coming next day, to stay perhaps for some weeks, as sick people do.

Then we said good-bye, and I opened the wicket to pass through; but seeing the wet in her eyes, lingered a while longer till she was smiling again, when I let her go. But I looked back again every dozen yards or so; and when I got across the second meadow and stood by the stile before vaulting into the high-road, I could still see the straight white figure among the green, and the waving handkerchief. So I asked God to keep her, and went my way with the rose she had given me. Walking home in the pink twilight, the heaviness at leaving her wore off as I looked into the future and saw what was there, or rather what I pictured in it. For when

love is the warp and fortune the woof, what will not the shuttle of fancy do?

Yesterday, things had been so different. Of all my airy castles, there seemed hardly one left, and I had built a good few. Before I knew Doris, such imaginings had never troubled me; but when I had met her at Winchcomb flower-show, love had touched me with its wand, and all of a sudden the dead wall of my life, like that in Chaucer's Romaunt—for I had read a thing or two in the long winter nights before the old place had been hammered into other hands—seemed all alive with pictures. Everything was lit up; the world seemed a new place, and life had sweeter meanings after I had looked into Doris's eyes and she into mine. And when, after many months, I plucked up courage to ask her heart how it was, and she told me, the future widened out in such a fashion that the sight of it nearly made me light-headed.

Had I known how things were, I should have held my tongue, through shame and hopelessness. But my father never gave a sign that ruin was near upon him; that my comfortable heritage, as I deemed it, was mortgaged to its last rood. The crash came, and then the sale, and then life in a little cottage with a broken-down father and a changed look-out, which perhaps made me over-moody. For sometimes I despaired of ever possessing Doris, or of being able under many years to support her in a way fitting to her upbringing. Everything would be broken off, and it would all be a dead wall again.

It was in some such humour that the notary's letter found me that morning. I had seldom heard of Uncle Ben, and had never seen him. He had in early manhood deeply wronged my father in some way, and his name was rarely mentioned. I handed the letter to father, and he was dumb like myself, his face working strangely between anger and something softer. Then he put it down and said: 'Conscience-money, lad, every penny on it; but it's saved yer from my folly, so tek it, an' thank God for teachin' Ben repentance an' me forgiveness—no easy lesson, when a brother— Well, well, let it lie. Poor Ben!'

No wonder, then, that I saw visions as I walked home in the light of the aftermath. It was nearly dusk when I arrived at the cottage; and as I turned for a last look at the burnished hills, a bat came between me and the light and fluttered mockingly before me. But I kissed my rose and laughed at the flittermouse.

I had lived some twenty-five years in the world without knowing much more of it than what our valley and its neighbourhood had to show; so that what I saw on my long journey to my uncle's Canadian farm made me wonder and marvel, as young people do when they go for the first time beyond the mountains and see what is there. But there is no need to dwell upon that; and, moreover, it doesn't concern the drift of what I am telling you.

Nor need I say much about the farm and personal estate which had come to me by my uncle's will. I found that the latter came to some eighty thousand dollars, chiefly invested in Northern Pacific and other stock; and the former a large tract of prairie-land, with house,

farm-buildings, and every appointment of a first-class property. There was a new railway creeping up, which would double its value in a few years' time; and it was for me to say, after I had seen the place, whether I should let it, or wait, or sell it right out. I wrote the lawyer, saying that for the present I would take it in hand till the corn was safely harvested.

So one thing leads on to another, and we prepare our own destiny without knowing it. But I had looked at things in a practical way and according to my lights; and the notary commended me; and Doris sent a letter along saying: 'Yes, Jack; but don't tarry the thrashing too,' which was only sweetheart-like.

The weeks passed on, and I found plenty to occupy and interest me, as was natural. I let Boss Wilson keep much of his authority—he had been in charge of the farm since the death, and his loquacious company was not disagreeable after I had learned to know him. One day in the town near by I happened upon a Worcester man—one Henshaw—and his clannish good feeling made the place still less lonely. Then every week Doris wrote down her little heart for me to read it, and I sent her an account of mine; and all the while the same sun warmed us, and the same moon set us thinking one of the other when the day was over and our souls skipped out for a game at dreams. She was there and I was here, and soon there would be no there and here, but only one place and we in it.

Thinking to this tune I jumped into the saddle one August morning and rode to the post-office for the usual weekly letter. I always rode over, because the postboy who passed us on his way to the next settlement waited for the second mail at noon. I met Mr Henshaw at the door of the office with two letters and a newspaper in his hands.

'Mornin', Mr Sedley,' said he; 'lot o' letters this mail; let me hold the cob till you come out.'

That was the beginning of it—there was no letter. I rejoined Henshaw, and walked down with him to his store, heavy with disappointment.

'Like to see the paper?' said he, as I was leaving, after ordering some supplies of his man. 'Tain't often I get one; but my brother's hayricks 'a bin blazin', an' he's sent the account of it. Arl new hay too, an' on'y part insured. Ain't it a pity?'

I said it was, and looked moodily through the columns for news that might interest me. I only learned that there had been a regatta at Evesham; and that our old doctor at Ranston had sold his practice to a Dr Robson—that was all. But as I rode home I kept muttering that doctor's name, wondering where I had heard it before, till suddenly it came to me, bringing a lot of something else with it.

Why had Doris never mentioned him beyond the postscript in her first letter, weeks ago? I had clean forgotten she had a Cousin Stephen, so little did I heed him; but he was still at Ranston, still perhaps an inmate of her home. Why— Here I dropped the reins, and drew out her last letter, to steady me. I read it through, and the dear words brought kindness back, and I kissed her name at the end, saying some one was a fool.

But the doubt had found entrance, and grew, as cancers do, without our knowing it. For the days went on, and no letter came, no sign, till I grew half-wild at the cruelty of it. I wrote, reproaching her; and another week went and another. At last the letter came. The postboy handed it to me as I stood at the gate—I daresay he wondered why I was always there—and I ripped it open, while my heart pumped fit to break itself. Then the paper dropped from my hands, and I held on to the gate with a singing in my ears, and a sudden weakness in seeing, which darkened the sun and all beneath it. . . .

Doris unfaithful—it wasn't natural. Our souls had grafted, and we were one; we were two streams that had met to turn the same millwheel together; our hearts were bound with ligaments of their own growing; there was no undoing what nature had so willed. Yet there was her handwriting, her own words in good black ink telling white it was a liar.

Then all at once, through the rush and swirl of it, came the thought of the new doctor, and a queer coldness went through me as if I had been turned to clay before my time. The life seemed to go out from me, and I could scarcely move my feet as, half staggering, I went indoors and dropped into a chair. Again I read the note, though every cursed word was burnt in my brain for ever.

'I cannot marry you, dear—it is impossible. I like you—I am fond of you, as I told you in the orchard that evening; but I cannot be your wife—I cannot indeed. Oh, I wish I had told you earlier how things were; it was cruel of me to let you go on loving me without telling you the truth. I was afraid to at last; but now you are away it seems less difficult to say. Forgive me; look elsewhere for a more fitting mate—some one who can fully share your new life with you, and help you as a wife should, with head, heart, and hand—some one who can love you better than

DORIS.'

An hour went by, maybe two, while the hardening went on; while the love died away, and the light and the joy of life dimmed and flickered out, leaving me in darkness with hate and revenge. Then I rose up and looked round at the difference of things; for all seemed altered, and not the same. I moved to my desk, and unlocking a drawer, took out all her letters, and they, too, had altered, and were merely so many pieces of paper, not sacred things to be touched with reverence, like bits of the holy rood. But the breath of lavender from them got at some soft corner in me, making my eyes hot and tightening my throat. For a second or two I paused, looking at the vision that grew out of them, till anger puffed and blew it all away, leaving me with only the bundle of papers. This I wrapped up, along with a dead rose and a lock of yellow hair, and directed to Miss Hanlow, Ranston-in-the-Vale, Worcestershire, England.

'Here,' said I, as Nita, my uncle's old house-keeper, hobbled in to lay the cloth for tea; 'let one of the lads take this to the depot before dark. No matter; I'll take it myself.—Where's Boss?'

'Goin' away?' said Boss Wilson, as I pulled up, half an hour later, at the gate he was mending—'just as the corn's yellowin' for the machines? Summat wrong? You look kinder hit—hope

'tain't serious.' He wiped his face, looking hard at mine, which I turned away, feeling it was a tell-tale.

'You won't be alone long,' I went on. 'My father is on his way, and will take possession of the farm and see to things in my absence. I have asked him to keep you on, Boss, and I think you'll find him a good sort.—Good-bye. See you again some day when I've—when I've found what I want.' I glanced down at his furrowed face and saw kindness in it.

'Lost summat, gaffer?' said he, and I could feel the search of his look. He was a shrewd man, twice my age, and may have noticed many things since we had been together.

'Ay, I've lost something,' I answered; 'but it's not that I'm after, Boss. No use hunting for broken bubbles, I take it.'

'No, 'tain't,' drawled Boss; 'but whatever you're after, it'll tek some findin', I guess, an' you may scour the world up an' down an' find it in yourself when all's done. Have a good knock round, gaffer; an' when it's all burnt out, come back again and mek friends wi' things.'

I could see his outstretched hand, and mine went to it involuntarily.

'S'long, gaffer,' was all I heard as the horse leaped away with me down the rough track.

'So long,' I said to the hot silence and the western solitude, where I had dreamed my dreams awhile, tolerant of the summer loneliness as long as I could people it with fancy and see Doris and good company beyond it. But to remain there with my dead hopes all about me, grinning like marionettes which love had made caper, deluded by its own magic; to live on through the long monotonous heat with no opposite shore for the bridge of thought to touch, with no future but a fogbank where had been a fair country. No, I could not.

ON LOOKS.

THERE is probably no subject in the world which excites more interest in the human mind than personal appearance. Whether we are conscious of it or not, it is the centre of the greater portion of our daily thoughts. Look, for instance, at some of the other themes on which thought dwells—Ambition, Anticipation, Anxiety, Charity, or Sympathy. The space of time occupied by any one of these in twenty-four hours cannot equal that which we spend on our toilet, dress, and comportment combined. They claim our attention at the earliest hour of the morning; follow us instinctively through every action of the day; are present at our meetings of social intercourse; haunt our pleasures, not unfrequently mar them; and are probably in some degree the last shadows which veil us from the land of dreams. Considering that it is very important that our minds should not be burdened with what is unworthy, it would be well for us to assure ourselves that the effect this produces is not intended to be prejudicial. At first glance a person may disclaim the imputation, and say: 'Indeed, I think very little of my personal appearance;' or, 'I have no looks to boast of, so it's little time I spend on them.' To each of whom we would reply: 'My friend, you think

more of your personal appearance than you are aware of; and you spend more time on your looks because they are *not* good.

People who depreciate or pretend to be wholly indifferent to their looks, either act a lie, or else fail to recognise the main structure on which the human mind is built. What, in fact, are looks for? If faces were like blades of grass or leaves of trees, where would be our identity? Where would be our passions? Where would be our motives? The whole world would become a gigantic piece of machinery, worked by the mind of man, without aim, without vitality, without result. It is the human form divine which gives lifeblood to our passage through this world. Emulation, self-respect, improvement, and admiration, are all qualities which spring from the consciousness that outward appearance is, and was intended to be, a matter of first importance. It is as much a law of nature as self-preservation. No matter how handsome or how ugly a man may be—and there is no distinction between man and woman here—let him go arm in arm with a friend towards a mirror. Whose image does he first glance at? Not the friend's, you may be sure. Observe a lady walking along the street. How many times will she glance at her own reflection in the shop windows? As often as she gets the chance. The sight never loses its novelty. That question, 'What am I looking like?' never loses its fascination. Let her go into a room full of mirrors. She will look into one on the right; then immediately turn and repeat the process on the left. She is quite right. The two sides are entirely different. Again, let her see a friend appear in a new dress or fashion. What is the first thought that occurs to her? 'Now I wonder how that would suit me?' She immediately turns over in her mind how and when the idea is to be carried out, while the friend is all the while flattering herself she is an object of admiration.

Let no man or woman condemn themselves for this weakness. It is common to all alike. Neither let them undervalue good looks, nor despair of improving bad ones. The gift of beauty is often allied with a fascination of manner which plain faces may sigh for in vain. If it could be bought for money, what price would not be paid for that peculiar glance or smile which is imparted for all time!

But while we acknowledge its power and envy its possession, there is much to be said on the opposite side. Those who lack beauty avoid its snares. Those who are passed by, pause to ask themselves how they may turn life to its best account. They have no chance in the world of show. They will not even have honourable mention. They had best not compete. Other fields are open to them, wider and more satisfying than the gift that fades. We are few of us born geniuses; but we venture to say many who come under that head have become known to the world from the simple fact that they were born with a plain face. It is easy to recall instances where even severe bodily affliction has not been an obstacle to a distinguished career. There is, however, one kind of beauty with which no one is born and to which any one may attain, but the means of acquiring it is a secret which each must find out for himself. It is

exceedingly rare and exceedingly beautiful. At least once in our lives we may remember to have seen such a face, generally that of an old man with many lines in it. It arrests the heart as well as the eye. It makes us yearn for something yet unknown, that serenity of countenance which is the index of a saintly soul.

THE GOLDEN THREAD.

A MAIDEN stood in an old-world room,

With the early light on her golden hair,

And said, as she dusted her silent loom:

'The web of my life shall be bright and fair.

I will hasten to choose some silken strands,

And begin my work in the morning hours,

While the dew-beads gleam on the meadow-lands,

And the air is sweet with the breath of flowers.'

So she wove together each slender thread

Till the web grew broad and the web grew strong,

While high in an elm-tree overhead

A blackbird warbled his matin song.

But noontide smiled on the hill's green slope

Ere she said with a sigh of soft regret:

'I have finished my threads of faith and hope,

And the hues of my web are sombre yet!'

Then, over the bridge where the rannel flowed,

And under the shade of the leafy lane,

In brodered doublet a stranger rode,

With something bright at his bridle-rein,

Who bent her unfinished work above

To say in a whisper: 'Maiden sweet,

You need but this golden thread of love

To make the web of your life complete.'

Did the woof break off with a sudden jerk

As the gleaming shuttle was swiftly thrown?

For the maiden found it was weary work

Weaving Life's intricate web alone.

And the stranger saw that her face was fair,

And spoke of the road and the scorching sun,

And owned 'twould be pleasant her task to share

By the rose-screened pane till the day was done.

So he wove with her till the light grew dim,

And daisies closed on the quiet lea,

And the blackbird ended his vesper hymn

On the highest branch of the old elm-tree.

When the minster clock in the tower struck eight,

And shadows lay on the hill's green brow,

She rose and said: 'It is growing late,

And I think that my web is perfect now!'

The years went on, and his youth had fled

When they stood once more in the quaint old room.

Time's snows had silvered her golden head;

The dust was thick on the broken loom.

But he looked at the web they had wove that day

When Life was young and their hopes were new;

When he rode o'er the bridge by the leafy way

'Neath a sun that shone from a heaven of blue;

And, folding in his her white, worn hands,

He kissed her there by the rose-screened sill,

And said: 'Sweet wife, through these faded strands

The thread of our love runs golden still!'

R. MATHESON.

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